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[619] six kos east of Rewa city. One of the Kol sub-divisions is called the Binj *kurhi*, and it seems to be generally considered the highest of all their divisions. This group does not seem to exist now-a-days, or at least they do not know where its members may be found, but the implication is that this is the highest group and so perhaps the first group, and that it had its origin in the Binj mountains, the modern Vindhya range of Central India. These mountains lie, generally speaking, to the west of the centre of the Kol population of the present time. The inference might be drawn from these facts that they are from the country to the west. Other informants said that the Kols came into Rewa from the north. It would thus appear that their traditions are very uncertain on this point. Other of their traditions look back to Chitrakot, in the Banda district, which is to the north-west of the present population centre.

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539 A story is told by Kols that the *devalas* or gods were very happy at the birth of Rama and that they desired to celebrate it properly. What was the best form in which to enter the world, was the question they had to decide. They considered that part of the praise should be by song and drum—the *dholak*—so they conceived the idea that the best they could do would be to take the form of Kols. This they did and built a great temple at Chitrakot, sang songs and played the *dholak* there in honour of Rama. When asked further just why the *devalas* took the form of Kols the answer was a bit fuller than intimated at first. They said that the Kols were both the best labourers and the best singers in the world. No one could build the temple so efficiently and so speedily as they and also none like them could praise so acceptably. Therefore the gods came in the guise of Kols.

Quite consistently the Kols to whom we talked trace their origin back to a certain Sheori or Savari or Shivari, calling her 'The Mother of all Kols.' The name may possibly go back to the Savaras of the *Mahabharata*, although it seems more likely that it is based on a certain Ramayana story. The stories vary considerably but their main purport is as follows: There once lived a certain woman named Sheori. She is called by some Koinl (hence Kols) and by others Bhilni.¹ The latter term links the Kols and the Bhils together: this is quite a common, and significant occurrence in their stories. She was a faithful devotee of Bhagawan. Sometimes those who relate the stories call him Siva and at other times Krishna. She followed her lord always and it was her greatest desire to serve him in any way she could.

[193] ¹ 'N' is the feminine sign; thus 'Koinl' means a Kol woman. In the same manner 'Bhilni' means a Bhil woman.

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some reason or other do not call in a low caste midwife. It was also reported that this group does not make any use of the Hindu priest and is very low in the social scale. Some claimed that this is really a group of Chamars—leather workers in the traditional sense, but Russell and Hiralal do not mention it in their glossary of caste divisions nor does Briggs report it. It is probably of minor significance.

16. Bhariya is the same as Bhumiya, see above.

17. Barwar does not appear in Russell and Hiralal nor in the list of tribe and caste responses in the 1931 Census. Nor is Barwar found there. Barwar, said to mean "disciple of the bar or banyan tree" (*Ficus indica*), is listed among the septa of the Kols in the north by Crooke as was seen in the previous note¹ on his findings. In a later book Crooke speaks of Barwars as a criminal tribe of Oudh.²

18. Pawai. One group gave the information that this *Burhi* lived in the south, 'Chawhan Khand'. In Singhbhum, Bengal, the Bhuiyas call themselves *Pawan-bans* meaning 'children of the wind'. The Bhuiya highlands are called Pawri Desh.³ This may indicate a memory of a connection now long lost.

19. Maubhaiya. No trace nor information concerning this group could be found. It was reported only once.

The Census of 1891 attempted to record the names of subdivisions of castes, in some detail, and the resultant list contained thousands of names of every kind. The Ahir alone had over 1,700 entries. The subdivisions of the Kols manifest the same tendency and show that the groups have absorbed into themselves members from higher and lower castes. The Thakuriyas probably contain a Rajput element and at the other end we find Kols mixed with Khengars, Murhas, Khairwars and Chamars. The Kols of today are probably pretty well mixed with other groups.

MAINTENANCE OF THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE. Kols who live in close contact with city life have frequently lost the sense of social solidarity which characterizes the Kols living under more primitive conditions. Various factors in city life, or near-city life, tend to make the same rigid social order impossible, and yet even under these conditions there is an attempt to maintain something of the older traditions.

Almost every village has an elderly man who may be considered in a sense the head-man of the community. He is usually called *Mahata* or literally, the leader. This man is the natural head of the

¹ See page 22.

² Crooke, W., *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, p. 188.

³ Russell and Hiralal, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. II, p. 315.

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